

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 1991 the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 46/36L entitled Transparency in Armaments, creating the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Eight years later the international community is taking stock of the participation in and impact of the Register as a cooperative security regime. While the Register has accomplished much, it has reached a plateau in terms of the quantity and quality of both information and number of participants. It has not moved beyond the original design of fall 1991. And it has had little impact on both the outbreak of conflict and the lowering of transfers in armaments, two of its original goals. On this occasion of the fourth review of the Register by a Group of Governmental Experts (March-July 2000), this report evaluates the Register performance to date, examines the root and proximate causes of the current stagnation, and makes recommendations for moving it forward so that it can play the role intended by the international community when it was created in 1991.

The signs of success of the Register include an evolving norm of transparency, as indicated by 80 or so states regularly reporting data, the participation of most all producing states which ensures making public most of the arms transfers in the international system, incremental progress in the quality of data reported, background information now reported as a part of the official UN report, the public availability of heretofore secret information, reforms of national reporting procedures as a result of the Register, and the enhancement of the capacity and role of the UN Secretariat.

Unfulfilled objectives include little improvement in generating nil reports, no reduction in arms exports to regions of tension, continuing discrepancies in the data submitted by suppliers and recipients, resistance to reporting military holdings, non-participation by states in critical conflict-prone regions such as Africa and the Middle East, and a failure to expand beyond the seven categories, in particular to weapons of mass destruction and small arms and light weapons.

The implementation of the Register to date has been influenced by its creation at a unique time in history when the northern arms producing states which had supplied Iraq felt the need to do something to prevent similar occurrences. This seminal event has faded in history and has effected participation accordingly. While initially the capacity of states to participate was a problem, most states now understand the procedures and have enhanced their capacity to comply. Support for the Register has waned in recent years due to lack of emphasis and promotion by key states, the defection of China, and the recent campaign by Egypt and a coalition of Southern states to include weapons of mass destruction in the Register. Additionally, the Register is viewed as irrelevant by many since it does not apply to intra-state conflicts fought with small arms and light weapons not covered by the Register.

The Register has also leveled off in importance due to underdeveloped theory as to how the Register was supposed to work in accomplishing its goal of building confidence, providing early warning, and preventing arms buildups from leading to armed conflict. Since